



**Office of the United States Attorney
District of Arizona**

PRESS RELEASE

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FORMER AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER SENTENCED TO 2 YEARS IN PRISON FOR UNLAWFUL POSSESSION OF PIPE BOMB AND MACHINE GUN

PHOENIX - Paul K. Charlton, U.S. Attorney for the District of Arizona, and Lester D. Martz, Special Agent in Charge for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, announced that on September 27, 2004, Laro Nicol, DOB 1/21/62, of Tempe, Ariz., formerly employed as an air traffic controller at the Phoenix-Goodyear Airport, was sentenced to two years in prison for two felony offenses, Possession of an Unregistered Destructive Device (a pipe bomb) and Possession of an Unregistered Machinegun, in violation of 26 U.S.C. § 5861(d), before Federal District Court Judge Paul G. Rosenblatt in Phoenix.

In his guilty plea on May 19, 2004, Nicol admitted that on February 22, 2003, he possessed a pipe bomb consisting of a sealed polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe elbow, explosive materials and green pyrotechnic fuse. The pipe bomb was not registered to Nicol as required by federal law. Also during his guilty plea, Nicol advised the Court that he made and possessed the device with the intent that it be used as a firework and had no intention that it would be used by anybody to cause harm. However, Nicol also acknowledged to the Court that the device was a

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pipe bomb under federal law due to the device's ability to project shards of PVC shrapnel at a high rate of speed if it was set off.

Additionally, Nicol admitted that on March 4, 2003, he possessed an unassembled CZ24, 7.62 X 25mm, machinegun not registered to him as required by federal law. Nicol agreed to abandon to ATF the unassembled CZ24 machinegun, a .223 caliber machinegun, seven semi-automatic rifles, one shotgun, and a small quantity of rifle magazines, ammunition and grenade parts. These items were all seized by ATF during the execution of a federal search warrant at Nicol's residence on March 4, 2003. Finally, Nicol admitted that during the 12-month period prior to March 4, 2003, he used methamphetamine on multiple occasions during which time, he had been employed as an air traffic controller.

This prosecution is another success for the District of Arizona's Project Safe Neighborhood's (PSN) firearms enforcement program. The effectiveness of PSN in Arizona is based on the ability of federal, state and local agencies to cooperate in a unified effort. One of the priorities of PSN is the prosecution of individuals who illegally possess dangerous weapons such as pipe bombs and machine guns.

Convictions for Possession of an Unregistered Destructive Device and Possession of an Unregistered Machine gun, in violation of 26 U.S.C. § 5861(d), each carry maximum penalties of ten (10) years imprisonment, a \$10,000 fine or both.

Nicol was on pre-trial release pending sentencing and was ordered during sentencing to self-surrender to the Federal Bureau of Prisons on December 1, 2004.

The investigation in this case was conducted by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Phoenix and Tempe Police Departments.

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